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Determinants of European tourism demand in a demographic ageing society

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Summary. This study identifies the senior European tourists determinants that explained their decisions to go on holidays. The empirical study was conducted among European tourists by applying a logit model. The model intends to explain the determinants related to the decision to go on holidays since the probability of a senior European tourist taking holidays in a country depends on a mix of motives as previous travel experience and demographic characteristics. Policy and theoretical implications are derived for contributing to the discussion between demographic variables and tourism demand choice patterns.

Keywords: tourism demand, ageing tourists, motives, demographic determinants.

Resume

Literature relating tourism and demography is “dominated by discussions on sustainability, but the demographic perspective is largely ignored” (Yeoman *et al.* 2011). Population ageing is occurring across the entire world and consequent challenges and constraints have been discussed mainly due to their impacts at the political, social, cultural and economic level. In 2050 28,1 % of the European population will be over age 65, but countries as Portugal, Spain and Italy will present higher values than the average European ageing rate. Nevertheless, the aging problem is not only registered in South Europe, for instance one of the most relevant international tourism markets to Portugal, such as United Kingdom, faces an average growth of 78,9 % of its elderly population between 2013 and 2060 (European Commission, 2014).

In the case of countries with a high propensity of receiving international tourism demand, as Portugal, the industry must pay attention to other factors that goes beyond the price competitiveness, as is the case of ageing effects that may reflect a change in travel

decisions, and as a consequence a selection for alternative destinations. Therefore, population characteristics that influence travel decisions as age, household morphology, motives and motivations of holidays, reasons to back again to the same destinations, among others, will be considered in this exploratory study. Tourism demand is influenced by this factors acting either positive or negative meaning, contributing to its expansion or declining. This set of factors is given the name of determinants of tourism demand. These factors exert a permanent influence on the tourism behaviour. As part of this societal challenge, ageing promotes demographic changes in modern societies and creates new challenges, e.g., creating and/or managing new tourism products, such as Health and Wellness; Medical Tourism; Cultural and Creative tourism. Additionally, it is also needed to improve and readapt all non-tourism services, such as public transport facilities for the development of tourism, mainly due to their implications on travel choice behaviour (Bernini and Cracolini, 2015; Nickerson, 2000; Reece, 2004). Furthermore, the increasing propensity of senior travellers in tourism has increased over time (Bernini and Cracolini, 2015).

The main goal for the development of the present research is to explain, applying a logit model, the determinants of senior European tourists to go on holidays. Based on the data extracted from European Commission's survey of EU tourists' attitudes (2013, 2014 and 2015), this research intends to explore new demand patterns concerning the future of tourism in Europe from a demographic perspective.

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